NEW MANIFESTATIONS OF THE DENIAL OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE IN TURKEY’S STATE POLICY

Key words: Turkey, the Armenian Genocide, R.T. Erdogan, Turkish-Israeli relations, Chanakkale, Turkish-Armenian relations

The Armenian Genocide is the most tragic and gloomy page of our nation’s modern history. For us – Armenians, the 20th century began with the devastating genocide and elimination, which had its fatal impact on our national psychology and mentality. However the Armenian Genocide is not only our nation’s tragedy, but it is a tragedy for the humanity as a whole. Regardless of the fact by whom or against whom the genocide is committed, it is a serious crime against humanity and does not have time limitation.

The Armenian Genocide (Mets Eghe rn) is a burden for Armenians firstly because it remained unpunished, moreover, it has not received a proper and wide condemnation on behalf of the international community, and, what is most important, there is no regret. This must be the reason why in the 20th century the world witnessed other serious crimes against humanity, the cruellest of which were the incidents in Sumqayit and Baku during 1988–1990.

Unfortunately the Armenian Genocide has become part of our national mentality, and we entered the 21st century, the so called era of «dialogue among civilizations», with it. You shouldn’t be a slave of the past but you can get rid of it only when the world assesses the past correctly. Today the overriding task of the Armenians is to unite all Armenians and all humanitarian power for reaching historical justice and for providing the peaceful development and strengthening of our home country.

In Turkey books are published one after another focusing on the denial of the fact of the Armenian Genocide and preventing actions towards its international recognition. The Turkish political propaganda concentrates on the denial of the validity of scientific papers related to the reality of the Armenian Genocide and on the need to review all the facts connected with it. Through the means of their own
groundless evidences and claims Turkish ruling circles continue to spread their own point of view at the international arena. Not only Turkish diplomatic representatives work along these lines, but also the initiative has recently been taken up by Turkish research and analysis centers, which aim to productively carry out anti-Armenian propaganda and raise the Turkish status in the eyes of international scientific centers.

It is worth mentioning, that during the 2000s, there were clearly sketched conventional groups supporting the genocide denial, as well as ones facing their own history, revealing the truth and the recognition of the Armenian Genocide (Elif Saşak, Orhan Pamuk, Kemal Yalçın, Fethiye Cetin and others). Elif Saşak thinks that in the modern Turkish society there are four approaches to the Genocide issue: a) ignorance and collective oblivion, b) deliberate denial and resistance (the voices of the supporters of this approach are the loudest), c) youth indifference justified by the argument that they are not responsible for what their ancestors did or didn’t do in the past, d) those who struggle for recognition (intellectuals, human rights activists, broad-minded people).

Besides, during the whole process of «Football Diplomacy» the subject of genocide continued to be discussed in Turkish social-political life, and, even though, in Turkish official announcements and mass media, as a rule, it is referred to as «the so-called Armenian Genocide» or «the Armenian claims of the Armenian Genocide», it is obvious, that Turkish intelligentsia and some social circles continue to raise this issue in an attempt to promote Turkish society to confront their own history. Highlight of April 2011 is the protest of the Turks and the Armenians in Istanbul’s Taksim Square to pay tribute to the Armenian Genocide victims, but on the other hand Turkish mass media was very careful about illustrating the above-mentioned event.

2 Հովհաննիսյան Ա., 2012, 2(38) ապրիլ-հունիս, 194:
3 On September 6, 2008, with the visit of the Turkish President Abdullah Gul a new phase of dialogue towards the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations seemingly began, which is known in diplomatic circles as «football diplomacy».
Nevertheless, it is clearly very early to speak about any positive changes in Turkey towards the recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide. The Turkish official circles continue to hinder the steps aimed at enhancing the process of international recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide. A good example of it is Turkish activity in France during the whole process of passing the bill criminalizing the denial of the Armenian Genocide, as well as Turkey’s demand to the newly-elected French president and government to prevent re-circulation of the draft of the bill in both houses of the French parliament. Official Ankara responded rudely both to this fact and the discussions around it by the parliaments of different countries. In March 2010 after the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Swedish Parliament had adopted the resolution of recognition and condemnation of The Armenian Genocide, Turkey’s authorities condemned those decisions indicating their negative impact not only on the bilateral relations, but also on the Turkish-Armenian relations without avoiding the anti-Armenian threats. The evidence of this is Turkish Prime Minister R.T. Erdogan’s statement: «There are 170 thousand Armenians living in Turkey 100 thousand of which is not legal and are not citizens of Turkey. Tomorrow, if needed, we will exile them from our country».

It is worth mentioning here the words of the Director of the Peace Research Institute of Construction Law and Human Rights at USA Columbia University, the American diplomat and expert David Phillips, who thought that the Turkish Prime-Minister Erdogan was not only the main supporter of the denial of the Armenian Genocide, but also the main troublemaker in Turkish-Armenian relationships.

Notably, the firsts to condemn the Armenian Genocide, despite multiple pressures of public authorities, were the Turkish intellectuals. For example, the famous Turkish journalist, publicist Orhan Kemal Cengiz once said: «Turkey should apologize for the Armenian Genocide and establish internal legislative measures for granting financial compensations».

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Turkey was also seriously concerned about the unprecedented tension in Turkish-Israeli relations resulting in a possibility of Armenian Genocide recognition by Israel as well as rapprochement of the Armenian and influential Jewish lobbying organizations in the US notabene. This concern was further heightened when in June 2009 the newly appointed Israeli Ambassador to the US Michael Oren, referring to the Armenian Genocide issue, called it genocide. Moreover, the discussions on the recognition of the Armenian Genocide in Knesset were regular. In particular, on May 13, 2014 the Knesset held a special plenary session to discuss the subject of the Armenian Genocide.10

Besides, Turkey, closely cooperating with Azerbaijan, is trying to raise the so-called «Khojaly Tragedy», falsely attributed to Armenians or the Guba case in 1918, the absolutely groundless accusation of the Armenians committing «genocide» against Jews, thus, in fact, trying to balance the demand of the recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide and to, at least, gain time for breaking the above-mentioned upcoming wave impetus in 2015.11

The denial and distortion of the history of the Armenian Genocide by Turkish authors has long been transformed into state policy and Turkey not only feeds it with its huge financial resources but also directs the anti-Armenian propaganda. The purpose of this policy is to neutralize the process of recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide in different parts of the world.12

The evidence of it are the words of the Turkish Deputy Prime-Minister B. Arinc: «This year marks the Dardanelles events as well as the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide allegations. We are conducting some serious work. Works are carried out using symposiums, conferences, seminars, publications and documentaries. However, we are also developing specific activities in the field of public diplomacy to influence public opinion all over the world»13. In this context, what is worth mentioning is the creation of a special department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, called «2015», which was engaged in preparations for the 2015, with a proper amount of financial resources.14 The program developed by this Department also establishes the basic rules of behavior for Turkish statesmen and politicians. Towards the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide Turkey’s current president (then prime-minister) R. Th. Erdogan’s statement, addressed to the Armenians on April 23 2014, the eve of the Armenian Genocide, was a step towards

10 For more details cf. Արշակեան Գ., 2015, հատոր 35, 583–604:
12 For more details cf. Մարուքյան Ա., 2015, № 1, 24–35
13 Հովսեփյան Ա., 2015, № 1 (16), 27:
14 Ibid.
the implementation of the developed action plan of the Turkish government that was
based on the «common pain» thesis according to which: «During the First World
War a lot of unfortunate incidents happened in which not only Armenians, but also
Turks and other Muslims were killed, and that pain is shared by everyone» thus he
avoided to call the mass killings of the Armenians and the dispossession of their
Homeland genocide, as well as tried to «fit» the pain of the Armenians in the frame-
work of the First World War to equalize it with the losses incurred by the Turks.15

It is worth mentioning, that in November 2014 the Turkey’s Kurdish «People’s
Democratic Party» female MP Sebahat Tuncel had submitted a proposal to the Turk-
ish Grand National Assembly, which stipulated, that the Turkish parliament would
oblige the Turkish president to publicly apologize to the Kurds, the Alevi massacres
as well as the Armenian Genocide. Alongside with the Armenian Genocide in her
proposal Tuncel also mentioned Dersim (1937–1938), Marash (1978) Sebastia
(1993), Chorum (1980), the Kurds, the Alevis and the «lefts» massacres that fol-
lowed the military coup in 1980. According to the proposal, President Erdogan, on
behalf of Turkey, was to make an official and clearly defined apology for all of those
cases, first of all in front of the Turkish Parliament and then in one of the places
where the massacres took place. Within one year after this step a parliamentary
commission had to be created, which would be able to access all the state archives
and examine all details. Regarding the Armenian Genocide, April the 24th is suggest-
ed as a day of mourning in Turkey, besides, the ideas of compensations for material
and moral loss as well as guaranteed legislative changes, were put forward.16

In our opinion, this proposal is not pro-Armenian, it will rather serve the politi-
cal interests of the Kurds in Turkey. In fact, in the proposal to the Turkish govern-
ment the mentioning of the Armenian Genocide alongside with the Kurds and Alevi
massacres and repressions is an attempt to equate those disasters which are not on the
same level by their importance and scales. Besides, once again we can see that the
Genocide issue on the Kurdish agenda is considered as an important lever against
Turkey.

Turkey’s denial policy further increased in 2015. In particular, on March 19
2015, the Turkish President R. Th. Erdogan in his speech in Istanbul declared that the
aim of the Armenian campaigns for the recognition of the Genocide is neither to

15 The unofficial translation of the message of The Prime Minister of The Republic of Turkey,
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, on the events of 1915, 23 April 2014, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkish-prime-
minister-mr-_recep-tayyip-erd%20%C4%9Fan-published-a-message-on-the-events-of-1915_-23-april-
2014.en.mfa.

16 Պետրոսյան Գ., Թուրքիայի խորհրդարանում Ցեղասպանությունը ճանաչելու քրդական
com/239180.html.
reveal the truth nor to commemorate the Armenian sufferings but to attack Turkey.
Erdogan admitted that during the war tragic events possibly occurred, at the same
time adding, that during the civil unrest thousands of Turks were killed by Armeni-
ans. Turkish President, once again offering to set up a commission of historians,
blamed Armenians for not responding to the calls of Turkey to study the archives and
to reveal the truth of the history.17 His speech was followed by more than 40 US
congressmen’s initiative, who submitted another bill for the recognition of the Arme-
nian Genocide to the Congress.18 Turkey’s next step aimed at the failure of the events
dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide was the attempt by R. 
Th. Erdogan to conceal those events with Canakkale. Turkish president officially
invited leaders of more than 100 countries, including RA President Serzh Sargsyan,
to participate in the «International Peace Conference» and in the commemorationss
dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Dardanelles (Turkish: Canakkale) battle
taking place on April 24, 2015. It is obvious that the Turkish decision to observe it on
the 24th of April 2015 is not historically grounded. It was clear to everyone that it was
just another counterfeit of the Turks, which aims to distract the global attention from
the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.19 The popular Turkish journalist
Vahap Bichijin referring to Turkish president’s policy accurately noted that they
wouldn’t be able to hide the historical truth of the Armenian Genocide with «the
Ottoman games» and that sooner or later our nations would face the reality. «Ne-
eglecting the blood of thousands of poor, working people’s children, that was shed in
Canakkale, making attempts to politicize the events, taking measures to match, pro-
voking the nations against each other, is, to say the least, impudence. The most im-
portant thing is not to create a competition between the pains, but to try and under-
stand them. But it is a characteristic virtue of the oppressed and the revolutionar-
ies»20. Thus it is not a coincidence that in March, 2015 the President of Turkey told
the TV channel France 24, that only Ankara takes constructive steps towards the

17 Erdoğan: Armenian ‘genocide’ campaign seeks to attack Turkey, not uncover truth, 19.03.2015,
http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_erdogan-armenian-genocide-campaign-seeks-to-attack-turkey-
not-uncover-truth_375692.html.
18 Ibid.
19 Սարգսյան Ս., Գալիպոլիի հարյուրամյակը արմենոց իդը շրջանցելու թուրքական որո-
գայթ, Ազգ, 13.02.2015, http ://www.azg.am/AM/2015021309; Fisk R., The Gallipoli centenary is a
co.uk/voices/comment/the-gallipoli-centenary-is-a-shameful-attempt-to-hide-the-armenian-holocaust-
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1915-centenary-gallipoli-massacre-genocide.
20 Խայտառակություն. թուրք հոդվածագիրը՝ Ցեղասպանությունը Չանաքքալեի միջոցով
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normalization of Armenian-Turkish relationships. R. Th. Erdogan said. «As for the relations between Armenia and Turkey, I can say that so far it is Turkey that has been an initiator of positive steps. Armenia has not taken any positive step. We always lent a helping hand with peaceful intentions, but it always remains in the air. Last year on April 23 I came out with a message, which received a very positive feedback. However, the message didn’t receive any positive feedback from Armenia.»

The Turkish leadership was quite sensitive to the fact that on April 12, 2015 at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide victims, during the liturgy Pope Francis called the killings of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire as «the first genocide of the 20th century» emphasizing: «Remembering the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, that endless crazy tragedy is mandatory, because where there is no remembrance, evil is still keeping open the wound. Covering the crime means letting the wound bleed».

The Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan criticizing Pope Francis’ statement mentioned that when politicians and clerics begin to take over the role of historians, the result is «delirium rather than facts». On his part, the Turkish Prime Minister A. Davutoglu, calling the Pope's words not constructive, said: «The Pope's statement is not only an incorrect and incomplete interpretation of history, not only ignoring one group's sufferings whilst remembering the pain of others, not only giving service to worsening racism in Europe, but also an unsuccessful, wrong and inappropriate statement that accuses the Turks and Muslims in general in a collective crime. If there were no external factors the unfortunate events of 2015 would have never even occurred».

The insults towards the Pope aroused severe frustration and criticism in the whole Catholic world, including Europe, leading to a series of new European institu-
tions and European countries adopting resolutions of recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide.\textsuperscript{25}

Despite the steps taken by Turkey by 2015, 24 countries worldwide qualified the events in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 as genocide. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, a number of international organizations, governments of various countries’ provinces, local authorities, many internationally recognized genocide scholars and relevant scientific and expert institutions, political and public figures, analysts and journalists of many countries that haven’t recognized the Genocide, also qualify the events of 1915 as genocide, which gave basis to the leading genocide scholars to assert that the Armenian Genocide has already been recognized.\textsuperscript{26}

It is worth mentioning that on September 11, 2015, on the initiative of the Republic of Armenia, UN member states in a unanimous voting declared December 9 as the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide, providing another opportunity to the world's nations to remember the commitment to prevent it.\textsuperscript{27}

In addition, «the Commemoration and Dignity of the Armenian and other Christian minorities Victims of the Genocide during 1915 and 1916» resolution adopted by the German Bundestag on June 2, 2016, was a new blow to the denial policy by Turkey.\textsuperscript{28} The importance of the adoption of this resolution is not only due to Germany's internationally influential political role, but also due to the fact that Germany was an ally of the Ottoman Empire. Turkey's denial policy was always referred to the German sources saying that Germany does not recognize the Genocide, thus much has changed with the adoption of the resolution.

Conclusions

1. The denial of the Genocide during 1915–1923 perpetrated by the Turkish authorities is out of the question, and despite the existence of numerous facts proving the reality of the Armenian Genocide, the denial by the Turkish authorities continues today. The Turkish authorities have set a clear goal– to change the history and to

\textsuperscript{25} For more details cf. Մարուքյան Ա., 2015, 190–192:
\textsuperscript{26} http://www.armeniangenocide100.org/.
control Turkey’s future, and the academic circles prepare the scientific platform for politicians to advance the claims of denial of the Armenian Genocide.

2. Towards the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, the Turkish authorities were consistent in their work of the denial of the Genocide and tried hard to prevent the international recognition process, using new mechanisms and modern methods: propaganda, diplomacy, politics, science and society. On the one hand these developments demonstrate the developed and consistent counteraction against the recognition of the Genocide by the Turkish propaganda machine, on the other hand they ensure the failure of this policy based on lies.

3. Meanwhile, the reality of sincerely facing its own history and discussing the fact of the Armenian Genocide in public forums has become a substantive factor in Turkish history. Public groups of intellectuals that had viewpoints, free and different from the government, who were for the recognition of the reality of the Armenian Genocide, came forward. However, those, who share these viewpoints, were minority in Turkish public and political life and their activity was aimed, among other things, to find out and understand what would happen to Turkey if Turkey gives up the policy of the official denial.

4. Today as well, foreign states, raising the Armenian question at various international arenas, continue to be guided by their own interests, on which the Armenian-Turkish relations are still dependent. This is why the Republic of Armenia will have to show great vigilance and caution to the discussions of the Armenian Genocide at international arenas.

5. The adoption of the Armenian Genocide Resolution by the German Bundestag undoubtedly has a key role and is the cornerstone in the context of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. It will greatly contribute to and will give new impetus to the Armenian Genocide recognition process.

The significance and singularity of this resolution lies in the fact that Germany is the only country among the war-time allies of the Ottoman Empire who recognized the Genocide.

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ԱՅԼՈՒՆ

Հայոց ցեղասպանության հանգամանորեն անդրադարձ է կատարվում վերջին տարիներին Հայոց ցեղասպանության ժխտողական քաղաքականության հիմնական առանձնահատկությունները: Թուրքական պետությունը իր ֆինանսատնտեսական ռեսուրսներով ոչ միայն սնում, այլև նպատակավորում է հակահայկական քարոզչությունը: Այս քաղաքականության նպատակն է ցեղասպանության ճանաչման ու դատապարտման գործընթացները:

Ներկայացվում է 2000-ականներին թուրքական հասարակության մեջ հաստատող գրապահություն ենթադրվում են հայաստանցի ցեղասպանության ժխտողագրության համար, ինչպես նաև թուրքական քաղաքականության համար հիմնավորված է ոչ միայն հայոց ցեղասպանության, այլև հայոց պատմության, տոնման, տարածաշրջանային կարևոր գործունեությունների պատմության կյանքի համար։

Այսպիսով, Հայոց ցեղասպանության ժխտողագրությունը նշանակվում է կեղծիքի վրա հիմնված թուրքական քաղաքականության սնանկությունը:

Վերլուծվում է Հայոց ցեղասպանության 100-րդ տարելիցը Թուրքիայի ղեկավարության ժխտողական քաղաքականության ուժգնացումը և դրա հիմնական դրդապատճառները, ինչպես նաև 100-ամյա տարելիցին ներկայացված Թուրքիայի կողմից ծանր արդյունքներ, որոնք տեղի ունեցան 1915 թվականի հայոց ցեղասպանության ժխտողական քաղաքականության համար։
ՀԱՅՈՑ ՑԵՂԱՍՊԱՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԺԽՏՄԱՆ

նությունների ցեղասպանության հիշատակի և ոգեկոչման մասին՝ անվանումը կրող բանաձևի ընդունումը: Բանաձևի ընդունման կարևորությունը պահպանվում է ոչ միայն Գերմանիայի, այլ նաև Օսմանյան կայսրության համար, որից հետո, որ Հայոց Ցեղասպանության հիշատակի և ոգեկոչման միջոցով պահպանվում է ոչ միայն Գերմանիայի, այլ նաև Օսմանյան կայսրության համար.
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НОВЫЕ ПРОЯВЛЕНИЯ ОТРИЦАНИЯ ГЕНОЦИДА АРМЯН В ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЙ ПОЛИТИКЕ ТУРЦИИ

РЕЗЮМЕ

В статье обстоятельно освещены новые подходы и проявления государственной политики Турции по отрицанию Геноцида армян, а также основные особенности этой политики. Турецкое государство своими огромными финансово-экономическими ресурсами не только питает, но и целенаправленно армийскую пропаганду. Цель у этой политики одна: нейтрализовать процессы признания и осуждения Геноцида армян в различных странах мира.

Представлены чётко проявляющиеся в турецком обществе 2000-х подходы условных группировок – как упорных и последовательных сторонников отрицания Геноцида, так и сторонников выявления истины, признания Геноцида и принятия реалий собственной истории. Таким образом, формирование групп представителей турецкой интеллигенции и общественных представителей, выступающих с позиций принятия реальности Геноцида армян, ещё раз доказывает банкротство турецкой политики, основанной на лжи.

Анализируется усиление проводимой руководством Турции политики отрицания к 100-летию Геноцида Армян и её мотивы, а также провал мероприятий Эрдогана, организованные к 100-летию.

Лучшей демонстрацией провала политики отрицания Турецкого руководства было принятие резолюции Бундестага Германии 2-го июня 2016 г.

Значение данной резолюции обусловлено не только политическим влиянием Германии, но и тем, что Германия была союзником Османской империи.